# THE ALMIGHTY

His Gracious Token of Love

TO HIS

# Friend Abraham.

OR

# A SERMON

Preached in the Cathedral Church of *BRISTOL*, *January* 3. 1674.

By RICH. TOWGOOD, B.D. *now Dean of* Bristol, *and when time was, Chaplain in Ordinary to His late Sacred Majesty King* CHARLES *the First, of most blessed and most renowned memory.*

*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,* Gal. 6. 15.

LONDON:

Printed by *H. C.* for *H. Brome*, at the Gun at the West-end of St. *Pauls*, and are to be sold by *Humfrey Dixon*, Bookseller in *Wine-street*, *Bristol*. 1676.

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# To the Right Reverend Father in God GUIDO, by Divine Providence Lord Bishop of Bristol.

Right Reverend Father in God,
and my much honoured Lord,

YOur Desire I dare not deny, it is unto me instead of a Command: but I fear whatsoever it was that your Lordship approved of at the hearing, will not seem so approvable at the reading. Horace his Verse I may crave leave a little to change, and say,

Sœpius instibant animum dimissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.

That which may pass current out of a popular Pulpit, may not perhaps relish so well out of a publick Press. However, that which may serve to edifie a hundred, may serve also to edifie a thousand. And the world, I hope, may thereby see, that our ordinary labours in Bristol (which intend to sound no further than the walls

*of the Church, in which they are deliver-ed, are not so extremely contemptible, that our Hearers had need to keep up to themselves a company of Schismatical Teachers, fetch'd from far, to supply our defects. For I dare assure your Lordship, there are many Sermons frequently preached by my Brethren in* Bristol *which may challenge the light rather than this now presented to your Lordship; and yet I reckon this may pass without offence, having received the approbation of your Lordships judicious ear; and that it hath made bold to prefix before it your* Reverend Name. *I humbly beg, and hope, you will be pleased, as being the occasion of it your self, favourably to vouchsafe a pardon to*

Your Lordships most obliged

and most humble Servant.

*Rich. Towgood.*

# A SERMON

PREACHED

In the Cathedral Church of *BRISTOL*,

*Januar.* 3. 167⅞.

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ACT. vij. 8. former part.

***And he gave him the Covenant of Circumcision.***

THESE words are part of a Sermon preached by St. *Stephen* the *Protomartyr*, before the *Sanhedrim* or Council at *Jerusalem*, not long after our Saviours Ascension. What St. *Stephens* scope is in this Sermon, contained in this Chapter, or what he aims at in this particular passage, I shall not now stand to inquire. I shall at present look upon the Words as bearing full and perfect sence in themselves without any reference to the occasion or coherence, further then doth concern the two Relatives or Persons here spoken of, *He* and *Him*. Only that ye may not stumble at the choice of this Text concerning an antiquated Ceremony, ye may be pleased to consider that according to the order appointed by the Church, the anniversary Commemoration of our Saviours *Circumcision* is not quite over; as doth appear by the Epistle, Gospel and Collect for this present Day, and therefore a Text concerning *Circumcision* is not unseasonable. Besides, from this time we reckon the beginning of the *New year*, and Circumcision was a sign of a



*New*

*New-heart*, and of *newness* of Life. And lastly, the beginning of this moneth is the time wherein friends of the chief account do usually gratifie one another with gifts of kindness, and tokens of love; And here the Text tells us of a special Gift that the Almighty God vouchsafed unto *Abraham* his friend, for these two are the *He* and the *Him* here spoken of, as is plain by the Verses foregoing: *He* gave *Him*, that is, God gave *Abraham* the Covenant of Circumcision; so that though I cannot say, here is a *New-years* Gift, yet here is no small token of Gods love to *Abraham*. And concerning this Token of Love (to come now to the Words themselves) we have four things observable in the Text.

1. What it was.
2. Of what worth it was.
3. Who gave it.
4. To whom it was given.

Of these by Gods gracious assistance and your Christian patience in their order; and first of the first, what it was. It was the Ordinance of Circumcision. God commanded *Abraham* this service; and what kind of service this was, and by whom to be observed, and at what time to be performed is fully declared by the Holy Ghost himself, and cannot better be expressed than in his own Words, as we find them, *Gen.* 17. from the tenth to the twelfth: *This is my Covenant* (saith the Lord to *Abraham*) *which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every manchild among you shall be circumcised; And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a token of the Covenant between me and you; And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every manchild in your generations, he that is born*

in

*in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed.* This was the service that God commanded him and all his posterity. And a hard service it was, as appeared in that when the *Sechemites* were by deceit perswaded by the sons of *Jacob* to be circumcised, their whole City by reason of their sorenes after they were circumcised, was not able to defend themselves against two men; *For it came to pass on the third day when they were sore, that two of the sons of* Jacob, Symeon *and* Levi, Dinahs *brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the City boldly, and slew all the Males*, Gen. 34. 25. So likewise it is said of the Children of *Israel*, when they were all circumcised at their entrance into the Land of *Canaan*, because they had not been circumcised by the way, *That they abode in their places in the Camp till they were whole*, Josh. 5. 7, 8. But yet more fully doth the hardship of this service appear by that of *Zipporah*, who when she was enforced to circumcise her Son, said thus unto *Moses* her Husband not without bitterness, *A bloody husband art thou to me*; and doubled it, *A bloody husband, because of the circumcision*, Exod. 4. 25, 26. A hard service it was, and yet to be laid upon their Infants when they were but eight days old: Surely, we may justly take up the words of the Apostle, which were uttered by him in another case, *Heb.* 11. 40. *God hath provided some better thing for us.* Instead of that hard service (for abrogated now it is, *Gal.* 5. 2.) God hath appointed unto us the Sacrament of Baptism, which as for the use is more perspicuous, so for the quality is far less painful; and yet see the fond tenderness of Parents, and the foolish niceness of people now-a-days is such, that they can scarce suffer a little cold water to be sprinkled on their

Children; nay a few drops more than ordinary, shall procure as bitter words against their Minister, as *Zipporah's* were against her Husband.

But (to pass by this) here we may take notice, that St. *Stephen* doth call this Ordinance the *Covenant of Circumcision*, and so it is also called in that place forementioned, *Gen.* 17. 10. The Lord there thus speaking, *This is my* Covenant *which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man-child among you shall be* circumcised. *Circumcision* both there and here is called the *Covenant*, when indeed and in truth it was but the *Sign* of the Covenant. The Covenant was this, as it is plainly set down, *Gen.* 17. 7. The Lord there saying unto *Abraham*, *I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee.* This was the *Covenant* on the Lords part, that he would be a God unto *Abraham* and his Seed; and in the same words was included the *Covenant* on *Abrahams* part, that *Abraham* and his Seed should take the Lord to be their God, and should worship him, serve and obey him as their God. This was the Covenant, and of this Covenant, Circumcision was instituted to be the *Sign*, and so it is plainly declared, *Gen.* 17. 11. *Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a* token *of the Covenant between me and you:* and so the Apostle speaks of it, *Rom.* 4. 11. Saying of *Abraham*, *He received the* Sign *of Circumcision*, (*i.e.*) He received Circumcision, which was a *Sign*. It is the usual language of the Holy Ghost in Sacramental speeches to give to the *sign* the name of the *thing signified*. The *Jews* had two principal Sacraments, but more they had less Principals; and the

truth

truth of this, holds in both ſorts. Their two principal and ordinary Sacraments, were Circumciſion and the Paſchal Lamb. Concerning the former it hath been already ſhewed; yea may ſee it alſo concerning the latter. If ye look into *Exod.* 12. 11, ye ſhall find theſe words concerning the Paſchal Lamb, *Thus ye ſhall eat it, with your loins girded, your ſhoes on your feet, and your ſtaff in your hand; and ye ſhall eat it in haſte, it is the Lords Paſſover.* The Paſſover was the Act of the Angel paſſing over the Houſes of the *Iſraelites*, when he ſmote all the firſt-born in the Land of *Egypt*; and yet the *Lamb*, ye ſee, is called by the name of the *Paſſover*. The like we may ſay of other of their Sacraments: I will inſtance but in one, and that is the *Rock* out of which, when *Moſes* had ſmitten it with his Rod, water came forth for the relief and refreſhing of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, *Num.* 20. 11. And this *Rock*, Saint *Paul* ſaith, was Chriſt, 1 *Cor.* 10. 4. No man will ſay that Saint *Paul* meant the *Rock* was Chriſt in regard of the ſubſtance, but only by ſignification; and ſo Saint *Auguſtine* interprets it, *Petra erat Chriſtus, quia ſignificabat Chriſtum, Epiſt.* 102. *ad Evod.* Neither is this kind of Metonymy and Figure uſed only in Sacramental Speeches, but in thoſe Speeches alſo wherein there is no Myſtery of Religion contained; as in the interpretation of *Pharaohs* Dream, *Gen.* 41. *Pharaoh* in his Dream ſaw ſeven fat-fleſhed Kine come out of the River, and after them ſeven other lean-fleſhed Kine, *Verſe* 2. *Joſeph* in his interpretation thereof doth thus ſpeak unto *Pharaoh*, Verſe 26, 27. *The ſeven good Kine are ſeven years, and the ſeven thin Kine are ſeven years.* The meaning is, the ſeven Kine of the one ſort and the other do ſignifie ſeven years; the name of the *thing ſignified* being attributed to the

*Sign*

*Sign*, which ye see is a usual kind of speaking both in the Old and New Testament. And this may stop the mouths of the Papists about their Transubstantiation; who because our Saviour at the Institution of the Lords Supper, taking Bread in his Hand, said, *This is my Body*, do therefore think that the substance of Bread at the Sacrament must needs be turned into the Substance of our Saviours Body: But seeing other Sacramental Speeches are Figuratively understood, Why should we conceive that our Saviours Words are not so to be understood also? A real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament we acknowledg, for the Body and Blood of Christ, according to our Church-Catechism, are verily and indeed, taken and received of the Faithful in the Lords Supper, verily and indeed, that is, really, yet not carnally, but Sacramentally, not Corporally, but Spiritually. For otherwise, how could Believers eat the Flesh of Christ and drink his Blood before his Flesh had any *existence* or *being* in the World? The Apostle doth tell us that the believing *Israelites* in the Wilderness did eat the *same spiritual meat*, *and drink the same spiritual drink* that we do, and that is none other but the Body and Blood of Christ, and yet Christ was not then incarnate, 1 *Cor.* 10. 3, 4. Their *Manna* was the Body of Christ, and their *water out of the Rock* was the Blood of Christ; not in substance but in signification, they did signifie the Body and Blood of Christ. And surely, in all reason those Propositions and Sentences of Scripture that are incongruous to reason when they are taken in a proper sence, but suitable to reason in a figurative sence; in all reason I say, they ought to be taken Figuratively. And this the Holy Ghost himself doth teach us. For when Saint *John* had seen seven Gol-

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den Candlesticks, *And in the midst of the seven Candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man*, Rev. 1 12, 13. who had also *in his right hand seven Stars*, vers. 16. the Lord himself doth expound the meaning thereof, *ver.* 20. in these words: *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden Candlesticks. The seven stars, are the Angels* (that is, the Bishops) *of the seven Churches, and the seven Candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven Churches.* So in these two Propositions, The seven Stars are the Angels of the seven Churches, and the seven Candlesticks are the seven Churches, the Lord saith there is a *mystery*, that is, they are not literally, but mistically, or figuratively to be understood. Multitude of such speeches we find in Scripture, which cannot possibly be otherwise understood; as when *Joseph* interpreted *Pharaohs* Butler, and his Bakers Dreams: The *three branches*, saith he, are *three days*, Gen. 40. 12. And again, *vers.* 18. *The three Baskets, are three days*, that is, they signifie three days. So, *Isa.* 5. 7. *The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of a Israel*, that is, doth signifie the House of *Israel*: So likewise, *These bones are the whole House of Israel*, that is, they signifie the house of *Israel*, *Ezek.* 37. 11. Look upon our Saviours parable, *Mat.* 13. 37. I will mention but a branch or two of it. *The field is the world, the tears are the Children of the wicked ones, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the Angels*, that is, they signifie these things. I'le add but one instance more, and that is in *Gal.* 4. 24. *These* (i. e. *Abrahams* two wives) are *the two Covenants*; the meaning is, they signifie the two Covenants. Now when these passages of Scripture, and many others more, cannot

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be understood but by a Metonymy figuratively, why should our Saviours words, *This is my body*, only be excepted from this general way of interpretation, and have another interpretation affixed unto them, which is contrary both to Scripture, and to Sense, to Reason and to the Interpretation of the Ancient Fathers. To Scripture, because the Scripture tells us that Christs Body is ascended up into Heaven, and that the Heavens *must* receive him until the times of restitution of all things (*i. e.*) the day of Judgment, *Act.* 1. 9. and 3. 21.

And if it *must* be in Heaven (as the words, ὃν δεῖ οὐρανὸν δέξασθαι, *Acts* 3. 21. do plainly signifie) then he cannot be here on Earth too; and this argument our Saviour himself doth elsewhere make good, *Joh.* 6. 62. For whereas, when our Saviour preached at *Capernaum* and told them, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, ibid. *verse.* 53. the hearers were offended at it; and said, not only, *how can this man give us his flesh to eat?* but also, *this is an hard saying, who can hear it?* Our Saviour to take away this offence, and to give them the true meaning of his words, saith thus unto them, *ibid. verse.* 62. what and *if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* As if he should have said, when ye shall see my Body to be ascended up into Heaven, then I hope, you will understand that I speak not of this carnal eating of my flesh that ye dream of; for my Body will be then in Heaven, and there *must* continue. And this Argument holds good against the carnal eating of Christs Body in the Sacrament also, though our Saviour doth not speak thereof in that place; so contrary to Scripture is this interpretation of our Saviours words. And contrary it is to Sense; For that which we receive with our hands at the Lords Table, it is not flesh but bread,

bread

bread to our ſight, bread to our feeling, and bread to our taſte; contrary to reaſon it is alſo, and that in two reſpects; 1. In that, if the words were literally meant, our Saviour then at the Inſtitution, when he took the bread and uttered the words, had his own body in his hand, and ſo he had there two bodies, one ſitting at the table, and the other in his hand upon the table; and this is not very reaſonable. Secondly, In that, if at the adminiſtration, the fleſh of Chriſt in the very ſubſtance were there, it would ſtand us in no ſtead; for it is *the ſpirit that quickneth, the fleſh profiteth nothing.* Our Saviour ſaith, *Joh.* 6. 63. *My fleſh is meat indeed*, ibid. *ver.* 55. And why then doth our Saviour ſay here, the fleſh profiteth nothing. Our Saviour doth not contradict himſelf; and thereby it is plain, his meaning is, that the carnal *Capernaitical* eating of his fleſh, ſuch as the *Capernaeites* there thought he ſpake of, was of no uſe at all. And laſtly, Contrary it is to the interpretation of the Ancient Fathers I'le mention but two or three very breifly; *Turt. lib.* 4. againſt *Marcion*, thus ſpeaks, *Chriſtus acceptum panem & diſtributum diſcipulis, corpus ſuum illum fecit, hoc eſt corpus meum dicendo, i.e. figura corporis mei.* Bread taken and diſtributed to his Diſciples he made his body, by ſaying, This is my body, that is, the figure of my body Saint *Ambroſe* to the ſame purpoſe doth uſe the ſame word, *figura. Figura eſt corporis & ſanguinis Domini noſtri Jeſu Chriſti. l.* 4. *de ſacramentis, cap.* 5. and Saint *Aug.* on the third *Pſal.* ſaith, *Dominus Judam admibuit ad convivium, in quo corporis & ſanguinis ſui figuram diſcipulis commendavit & tradidit.* That is, The Lord entertained *Judas* at the feaſt wherein he commended and gave to his Diſciples the figure of his body and blood. Theſe three, to add no more, do agree in this particular, and they all uſe the ſame word *figura*, whereby they ſignified that the bread is nor turned in-

to the Body of Christ, but was a *sign* or *figure* of his Body, though called by the name thereof. It is the language of the Holy Ghost to give to the *sign* the name of the *thing signified*; so it is here in the Text, the Ordinance of the Circumcision is called the *Covenant*, which was but a *sign* of the Covenant. He gave him the Covenant of Circumcision. One thing more there is to be observed from this title, the Covenant of Circumcision, which I will touch but briefly; and it is this, That the Almighty God in his Sacraments doth make a *Covenant* with his people. Circumcision was a Sacrament, for there was a sign and a thing signified, as before was shewed; and therein God entered into *Covenant* with *Abraham* and his Seed. The Passover was a Sacrament, and thereby there was a *Covenant* made between God and his people. The *Israelites*, when *Hezekiah* sent abroad a Proclamation, exhorting the people to come to *Jerusalem* to keep the Passover, which had some years formerly been neglected, he thus he speaks them. *Now be not stiff-necked as your Fathers were, but yield your selves unto the Lord*; in the Original it is thus expressed תנו ידכם ליהוה, that is give the hand unto the Lord, and so it is rendred in the Margent of our Bibles 2 *Chr.* 30. 8. Now to give the hand, ye know, is a circumstance and sign of entring into *Covenant*; and by this expression is intimated, that by keeping the Passover, they made a *Covenant* with the Lord. The like is to be *said* of our Sacrament of Baptism; for the Apostle Saint *Peter*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. in respect of the inward part of it, doth call it ἐπερώτημα, and that word though it be by divers diversly rendred, as by our translation, an *answer*, by the vulgar Latin, *Interrogatio*, yet it is generally conceived that the Apostle doth therein allude unto the questions and answers that were made

made at the baptizing of people converted to Christianity; Such as, *Dost thou believe? I do believe*, &c. which had their beginning and use even in the Apostles time, as may be collected from *Acts* 8. 37. And therefore by some, the word is rendred *stipulatio*, that is, a *Covenant*, a *Bargain*, or an *Agreement* between two, one asking the question, and the other answering. Such a thing is Baptism, a *Covenant* between God and us; and though those questions and answers were omitted, yet this *Covenant* is included and contained in the very words which by our Saviour are appointed to be used at the Sacrament of Baptism, that is, *To Baptize in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, *Matth.* 28. 19. into the Name, or in the Name of the Three Persons of the Trinity, that is, into the Protection of the Father, into the Redemption of the Son, and into the Sanctification of the Holy Ghost. This is the Covenant on Gods part; and these are the Promises that are made of God unto us in that Sacrament, whereof our Church-Catechism makes mention. And on our part the Covenant is, that we will be his Servants, and yield all obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And this Covenant we renew when we come to the Lords Supper; for the Lord doth offer us his Son to be our Saviour, and thither we come to acknowledg, that we wholly rely upon him and his Merits, and to yield up our selves wholly to him and his service. Take we heed therefore all of us, that have been baptized, and have received the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, (as for others, they are not in Covenant with God, nor can expect Protection or Salvation from him); take we heed, I say, that we carefully perform the Covenant. Our Covenant is, wholly

ly to yield obedience unto God, and that we cannot do, without renouncing the works of the Devil, and the sinful lusts of the flesh: And if we fail on our part, God is not bound on his part. Besides, he will not take it well at our hands, if we break Covenants with him; he will have a quarrel against us for the breach of Covenants; nay, he tells us plainly, he will avenge the quarrel of his Covenant, *Levit.* 26. 25. Well, ye see Circumcision was called the Covenant; ye see that there was a Covenant in the Circumcision, as there is also in all Sacraments; even, in the Sacraments of the New Testament. There is one thing more yet to be observed, before we proceed to the next Part. In all the Ceremonies of the Law, Divines say, there are three things to be observed, that is,

1. That they were Memorials of some Mercy received.
2. That they were Types of Christ.
3. That they did signifie some Moral Duty.

Whether all these things are to be found in the Circumcision, and how it was a Memorial of Mercy past, or how it was a Type of Christ, I will not now inquire, but pitch upon that which the Scripture shews to be undeniable, and that is this, That there was a Moral Duty signified by the Circumcision; that there is a Spiritual Circumcision yet remaining, still to be observed and practised by all the people of God, even now in the time of the Gospel: And this is nothing else but the cutting off of carnal affections, the making of a new heart, and the putting off of the oldman. This is that the Apostle calls, *Circumcision made without hands, Col.* 2. 11. This is that the Apostle means, when he tells us, *He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and*

*Circumcision*

*Circumcision is that of the heart*, *Rom.* 2. 29. Nay, and even in the time of the Law, this was the Circumcision that the Lord chiefly required; and therefore doth *Moses* thus call upon the people, *Circumcise the foreskin of your heart*, *Deut.* 10. 16. And so doth the Prophet *Jeremy* in the same words, *Jer.* 4. 4. It doth not then a little concern us to consider, whether we are thus spiritually circumcised, yea or no. It was a fearful threatning, that was denounced against all those of *Abrahams* posterity, if they were not carnally circumcised, That *Soul shall be cut off from his people*, *Gen.* 17. 14. And if the Spiritual Circumcision, as hath been shewed, be more regarded by the Lord, shall not the neglect thereof be as severely punished as the neglect of the other? Surely the Prophet *Jeremies* words do make it good in that, *Jer.* 4. 4. *Circumcise your selves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.* Consider then with thy self, O Christian, Hast thou cast off the works of Darkness? Dost thou mortifie thy Corruptions? Dost thou deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts? If not, surely thou art not spiritually circumcised; but to use the Apostles phrase, *art dead in sin, and the uncircumcision of the flesh*, *Col.* 2. 13. But to descend a little lower, the Scripture doth intimate to us, That there is a Circumcision of the Ear, and a Circumcision of the Lips, *Acts* 7. *Jer.* 6. 10. and *Exod.* 6. 30. Examine thy self then, O Christian, Doth thine Ear refuse to hear the Voice of the Charmer? Or hast thou an Itch in thine Ear to harken after novel Doctrines? Doth it delight to hear evil Reports, and to receive false Tales? And is it not

them

then uncircumcised? Doth thy tongue delight in scoffing, give itself to swearing, whispering, or backbiting? And is it not then uncircumcised? Briefly, three things there were observed in the Circumcision of the Flesh, all which may serve to give us some further help and direction in this self-examination.

1. Circumcision could not be without dolour, without grief and pain. And certainly, forasmuch as there is no man living that sinneth not, nay, for as much as in many things we offend all, he who never felt any remorse of Conscience, that was never pricked at the heart, whose heart never smote him, can never reckon himself spiritually circumcised; and if it be but the interruption of our nature (and when Infants were circumcised, they were guilty of no more), yet had we need with sorrow of heart to humble our selves, and to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* To borrow the Apostles expressions, *Rom.* 7. 24.

2. The ancient Circumcision did distinguish the *Jews* from other people. As the *Grecians* called all others *Barbarians*, so the *Jews* called all others besides themselves, as it were by a reproachful and contumelious word, the Uncircumcised, 1 *Sam.* 17. 26. Yea, and they themselves were by others reproached for their very Circumcision By the name of *Judeus Apella*, the Poet speaks of him; So likewise, if we would be sure that we are spiritually circumcised, we must see there be a difference between us and worldly minded and voluptuous men that are in the world; not in opinion, as the *Pharisees* thought well of themselves and despised others, but in practice; for if there be as much vanity on thy back, as much venom in thy tongue, as much pride and malice in thy heart, as in the worst

of

of men, never think thy self to be spiritually circumcised. *Judah* and *Israel*, because in their practise they differed not from *Egypt* and *Edom*, from *Moab* and *Ammon*, are therefore ranked with them, and threatned with them, as being uncircumcised in heart, *Jer.* 9. 26.

The third thing observable in the Circumcision was this, It was a Sacrament of Initiation, whereby they were as it were consecrated unto God. They did thereby enter into Covenant with God, it was a sign whereby they declared themselves to be Gods peculiar people. And so surely, they that are not dedicated unto God, and so live as persons that are dedicated and consecrated, can never reckon themselves spiritually circumcised; for the Apostle saith, *We are the circumcision, that serve God in the spirit*, that is, in purity of life, *Phil.* 3. 3. He that is spiritually circumcised, and so devoted unto God, must yield no part of himself either of Body and Soul to any other service then to the service of God, *sicut votivis Deo, imitandus est tibi vitulus quem non licet humanis operibus deservire. Origen. Hom. 14. in Num.* A Bullock that is consecrated unto God, it is not lawful to put it to any humane service; and therein, saith he, must we be like him, if we have consecrated our selves to God. But ah alas! how many be there, that so live as if they had bound themselves by Indenture unto Satan, as if they had made themselves by vow his Slaves, counting it there honour to be prophane, and their greatest glory to stand at defiance with holiness. Is it not a great abuse for a consecrated Temple to be turned into a Stable, or into a Sty to hold Swine in? But how much greater is the abuse of the Body and Soul of a Christian consecrated unto God, to be-

become Satans work-house, for in such *Children of disobedience he worketh*, *Ephes.* 2. 2. The sum of all is, then Mortifie your members that are upon the Earth; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; cleanse your selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, for in this consists the spiritual circumcision (which neither is, nor ever will be abrogated) namely, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, *Col.* 2. 11. Ye see what this token of Gods love to *Abraham* was, both for the letter and the mystery. In the letter it was in the cutting off the foreskin of the flesh. In the mystery it was a sign of the Covenant between God and *Abraham*, and withal did warn and admonish him to cut off all vile and carnal affections. This is the first thing observable in the Text. I shall first be briefer in the other parts that are behind. Come we then to the second thing observed of what worth this token of love was, and that is imployed in the word *Nathan*, *he gave*, Saint *Steven* doth not say, he inflicted it as a punishment, or imposed it as a burthen, he *gave* it as a token of love, out of his special saviour. Gods Ordinances are special blessings, of singular worth. The Almighty God promised to this man *Abraham* the whole Land of *Canaan*, *Gen.* 13. 14. 15. a bountiful gift; and yet this gift here spoken of, the Covenant of Circumcision was of more worth then the whole Land of *Canaan* or all the Kingdoms of the world. It was a painful service, but of inestimable worth, it was *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, *Rom.* 4. 11. and so consequently it was a seal to assure him of the Kingdom of Heaven. All Gods ordinances are precious gifts, and that may appear first by the time which the Doner chose for the bestowing of them. When a man is parting from his friends, he will leave behind him some special

token

taken of love and so the Apostle saith when Christ Jesus ascended up on high he led Captivity Captive, and gave gifts to men, *Eph.* 4. 8. and yet I confess the Apostle doth not allude so much to the parting of one friend from another (as to the custome of conquerors, who after their victories go up into their Cities in triumph carrying their captives bound, and then withal giving rich gifts to their friends; so Christ having conquered hell, and death, and sin, and the Devil, led them captive and gave gifts unto men; but as to our purpose the question is, what those gifts were, and the Apostle tell us, *ibid. ver.* 11. he *gave some Apostles, some Prophets, &c.* these are the chief gifts that Christ Jesus thought good to give to his people (though the world doth not esteem them so) even at the time of his triumph when he was ascending into his greatest glory, as if he had no greater gifts to bestow upon them, and what is it for which they are reckoned by the Lord such singular gifts, but only because they are his messengers and the dispensers of his holy word and sacred ordinances? These are gifts of high esteem, and that doth thus appear, by the time when they were given, and that was at his ascension; For as the coming of the Holy Ghost was a fruit of Christs ascension; so also is the fitting of his messengers and the committing unto them the dispensation of his sacred ordinances, the fruit of the same ascension. Secondly, the singular worth and excellency of Gods sacred ordinances doth appear in that, they to whom they are vouchsafed, are dignified by them. *What nation is there so great,* saith *Moses* to the Israelites, *that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you, Deut.* 4. 8. and it is worth your noteing, that whereas the land of Ca-

land was so highly dignified and commended, *Dan.* 8. 9. the pleasant land, the glory of all lands, *Ezek.* 20. 6. the land of desire, *Zech.* 7. 14. It was not for that there was such plenty of silver and gold there for there was none at all, *Deut.* 8. 7, 8, 9. *Solomon* sent to *Ophir* for Gold, 1 *King.* 9. 28. and so did *Jehoshaphat*, 1 *King.* 22. 48. but it was chiefly because the ordinances of God were there setled. In respect hereof it is said, that there *the glory of God is seen in the sanctuary*, *Psal.* 63. 2. that is, in the Temple in *Jerusalem*, and his statutes and ordinances he gave unto that people which was a mercy that he shewed not to any other nation, *Psal.* 147. 19, 20. Thirdly, the worth and excellency of Gods ordinances do appear in the end and effect of them, for to this end they are given, and this is the effect of them, to beget grace in us and to bring us to Christ, such is the excellency of the word of grace, that is of the Gospel, that it is able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified, *Act.* 20. 32. It is able to make us *wise* unto Salvation, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. and *the wisdom* cannot be valued with the gold of *Ophir*, gold and christal cannot equal it, *Job* 28. 16, 17. It was the mystery of the Heathens, that they were without Christ, *Ephes.* 2. 12. and this is the most blessed and admirable use of the Sacraments to make us partakers of Christ. For as *many of us have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*, *Gal.* 3. 27. And the *bread which we break*, (that is the other Sacrament) *is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* 1 *Cor.* 10. 16. such is the worth thereof, it makes us partakers of Christ. All Gods ordinances are of estimable worth and excellency, And how comes it then to pass that these sacred ordinances are by so many slighted and

neglected? The word by some, the sacraments by others, both by most, and all the holy things of God, as if they were of no value. The things themselves surely are heavenly blessings, but it is the wretchedness of thy heart, O man, and it is thy misery thou dost not know the worth of them: What is the reason the sick man doth abhor all manner of meat; yea, the choicest dainties that can be provided? Is it not because his body is possest with dangerous unwholsom malignant humours, which if not removed will inevitably bring death? So when thou canst not relish the food of thy Soul, what is the reason? Is it not because thou art desperately soul-sick? *The natural man*, saith the Apostle, (and certainly the natural man is desperately Soul-sick) *he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*; 1 Cor. 2. 14. And what will follow hereupon but inevitable destruction? The Baptism of *John* was the Ordinance of God: The *Pharisees* refused to be baptized of him: What was the issue? They rejected the Councel of God against themselves, against themselves, that is, to their own ruine. And so, Shall the *Manna* be loathed, or any of Gods sacred Ordinances sleighted? And shall not he be offended? Mark how he complains, *I have written to him the great things of my Law, but they were counted as a strange thing*, Hos. 8. 12. Neither will it be sufficient to pretend the meanness either of the things of the Institution, or of the Messengers that are imployed about them: It is a vain thing to say, can a little water on my Body wash away the sin of my Soul? Or can a bit of Bread and sip of Wine make me Partaker of *Jesus Christ*? No. It is not these things

that do the Work. But the Almighty God upon our right use of these things according to his appointment. He doth the Work, he cleanseth us from our Sins, he makes us Partakers of his Son. It was not the sounding the of Rams Horns that threw down the Walls of *Jericho*, neither was it the Waters of *Jordan* that cured *Naaman* of his Leprosie, but the Almighty did both these Works upon the right using and observing what he had appointed. The like may be said of the Messengers by whom the Almighty doth send these Gifts. Are they mean in your sight? Be it so. Yet will a man refuse rich precious Treasure, because it is brought him in an Earthen Vessel? We are Earthen Vessels, but Treasure we bring you. 2 *Cor.* 4. 7. The Prophet *Elijah* in the time of Famine, *Had Bread and Flesh brought to him in the Morning, and Bread and Flesh in the Evening*, the Ravens brought it to him by the Commandement of the Lord. 1 *King.* 17. 4. 6. The Prophet knew very well that the Ravens were unclean Creatures, by the Lords own Verdict. *Levit.* 11. 15. And yet he had more Wit and Grace then to refuse that which they brought him from the Lord, otherwise, besides the Lords displeasure he might have perished for want of Food. I have but one thing more to add touching this point. These Sacred Ordinances which are of such inestimable worth, the Lord hath vouchsafed to us in great measure, and all the days of our Lives we have injoyed them. Let us now bethink our selves of returning [something] unto him. The circumstances of *New years day* are not yet quite over. Let us present the Lord with a *New years Gift*. Perhaps you will say, (and well ye may) *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?* Psal. 116. 12. But is there nothing indeed? I remember

ber a saying of *Æschines* a poor Disciple of *Socrates*; Many brought to *Socrates*, many rich Gifts; poor *Æschines* had nothing, but he comes to *Socrates*, and saith unto him, *Nihil dignum te quod dare tibi possim, inveni. Itaque dono tibi quod unum habeo me ipsum*; that is, I have nothing in the World worthy to be presented to you, and therefore I bestow upon you all that I have, my very self; In like manner let us give our selves to God. So did they of *Macedonia*, 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. And to doth the Apostle wish us all to do. *I beseech you brethren*, saith he, *by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*, *Rom.* 12. 1. and in the next verse he shews how it is to be done, *Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*; so then, make you a new heart, let us begin to lead new lives, and this will be an acceptable Present unto God. For that is it, that God requires, *Ezek.* 18. 31. But the time bids me hasten to the third and fourth things observable in the Text, that is, by *whom*, and *to whom* this Gift was given. I shall be brief in both. *He* gave *Him*. *He*, that is the God of Glory mentioned in verse 2. *He* gave, and indeed Saint *James* tells us, that *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*, *Jam.* 1. 17. There is no mercy, no blessing that any man doth enjoy, but it comes from him. What hast thou, that thou hast not received? 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. Are they natural mercies? Why he *giveth to all life and breath*, *Act.* 17. 25. Are they temporal blessings? Why, *Both riches and honour come of him*, 1 *Chron.* 29. 12. Are they spiritual blessings? *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally*,

vally, *Jam.* 1. 5. Is it eternal happiness it self? Why, *The gift of God is eternal life, Rom.* 6. 23. Is it not strange then, and may we not marvel at it, that God hath no more Friends? *Every man, saith Solomon, is a friend to him that giveth gifts, Prov.* 19. 6. And yet the Almighty God who giveth us all that we enjoy, may ask the question that *Jehu* once did, *Who is on my side, who? 2 King.* 9. 32. *All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christs*, as the Apostle complains, *Phil.* 2. 21. Every man is for himself, for his own profit, for his own pleasure, for his own will. But you perhaps may say, who is not Gods Friend? For the answer of this, I shall but produce a Scripture or two unto you, as that in *Psal.* 139. 20. *Thine enemies take thy name in vain.* Why then common Swearers, and all others that any way abuse the Name of God, are not his Friends. Again, *Luke* 19. 27. *Those mine enemies which would not that I should raign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.* Why then they that will not suffer the Lord to rule them and raign over them, are not his Friends. I will add but one more, and that in *Psal.* 68. 21. *God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.* Why then such as go on still in their trespasses are not his Friends. Those and many others may be declared to be such as God doth not take for his Friends. And would we be his Friends indeed? Our Saviour shews us the way, *Joh.* 15. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* But this we shall touch again in the next point to which therefore I come and shall but briefly touch it.

The fourth and last thing observable in the Text, is,

to

to *whom* this token of Gods love was given. He gave *Him*, that is *Abraham*, as appears in the foregoing verſes of the Chapter, *Abraham*, as Saint *James* tells us, was called the *friend* of God, *Jam.* 2. 23. two places there be in the Old Teſtiment, where *Abraham* is called Gods *Friend*, that is, 2 *Chro.* 20. 7. and *Iſa.* 41. 8. To him was this Covenant of Circumciſion given, ſo Gods ſpecial gifts are for his *ſpecial* friends. The Preacher *Eccles.* 2. 26. divides the world into two ſorts of people, and then he ſhews what gifts the Lord doth give to them both *God giveth to a man that is good in his ſight, wiſdom, and knowledg, and joy, but to the Sinner he giveth travel together and to heap up*, &c. Wiſdom and knowledg in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come (as ſome expound the words) are Gods ſpecial gifts, and theſe he giveth not to all, but to the men that are *good* in his ſight, that is, ſuch as he accounts his *friends*. The *favorites* of an earthly Prince, as they do alwaies injoy more of the princes favour ſo do they alwaies partake more of his bounty, and the ſpecial tokens of his inward affections are vouchſafed unto them, which are denied to others, eſpecially to thoſe that rebel againſt him: juſt ſo is it with the Almighty, and his friends or favorites. He give you but an inſtance or two. One is that of our Saviour to his diſciples whom he eſteemed his friends, *Matt.* 13. 11. *It is given unto you to know the myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them* (that is to thoſe that are not his friends) *it is not given.* The other is that Prayer of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Pſal.* 106. 4. *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou beareſt unto thy people*, he doth acknowledg there that God hath a ſpecial favour for ſome more then for

others,

others, and our of that favour he doth bestow upon them special gifts, health, and wealth, and riches, and honour, and the like he doth bestow many times upon those that are not his friends; but those things that tend to the happiness of the Soul as wisdom, and knowledg, and the Mysteries of the kingdom, and newness of heart, here signified by the Covenant of Circumcision, these are Gods special blessings, and these, ye see, are only for his special friends. And if we would have them (and surely of all things in the world, they are most desirable, as appears by that prayer of the *Psalmist* forementioned, *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people*) if I say, we would desire to have them we must become his friends: be we therefore such as *Abraham* was, and then we shall not miss of them. Such as *Abraham* was? why, what a one was he? why, sure in *Abraham*, if we would be like him, there are many things that we must take notice of.

1. In his carriage towards God.
2. In his carriage towards his neighbours.
3. In his carriage towards his own family.

1. In his carriage towards God, we may observe that whersoever he came he built an Altar, such care he had of the Worship and Service of God, as *Gen.* 12. 7, 8. and 13. 18. &c. Whatsoever God commanded, he was ready to obey, though it were never so against flesh and blood: when he was called out of his Country, from his kindred, and from his Fathers house, he obeyed and went forth, not knowing whether he went, *Heb.* 11. 8. when he was commanded to take his Son, his only Son, *Isaac* whom he loved, and to offer him up for a burnt-offering, he went about it without gain-saying, shewing thereby both his

his readiness to obey, and also to part with any thing, though never so dear unto him, for Gods sake; he had faith and confidence in God, and doubted not of his promises, even then, when unto human reason there seemed little hope of them, as that he should have a Son, when he was an hundred years old, and his Wife not onely ninety, but naturally barren, *Rom.* 4. 18, 19, 20. And that in *Isaac* his seed should be called; and that all Nations should be blessed in him, though he had a command to offer him up for a Burnt-Offering, *Heb.* 11. 17, 18, 19.

2. In his carriage towards his Neighbour, for therein we may see his Justice, his Mercy, and his Love of Peace. His Justice, in paying Tythes where they were due; *Melchisedeck* was the Priest of the most High God, and *Abraham* returning from the slaughter of the Kings, gave him the Tenth part of all, *Heb.* 7. 1, 2. His Mercy, in that he prayed to the Almighty God that he would be pleased to spare the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, with the three other Cities of the Plain, *Gen.* 18. 23, &c. And in that when they were oppressed and carried Captive, he armed his Trained Servants, and rescued them, *Gen.* 14. And for his Love to Peace, when there was like to be a difference between him and *Lot*, he was contented to part with his own right, rather than that there should be any strife between them; For though he were the elder man, and Lots Uncle, and though the Land of *Canaan* was given to him, and not to *Lot*, yet he gives *Lot* his choice, and wishes him to go into which part of the Land he pleased, that so there might be no danger of contention between them, *Gen.* 13. 9.

3. In his carriage towards his own Family; for

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